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NSC BRIEFING

12 March 1955

JAPANESE ELECTION OUTCOME PROSPECTS FOR REARMAMENT

- I. Japanese election results were as generally anticipated.
 - A. One result--nearly exact reversal in position of Japan's two conservative parties.
 - B. Prime Minister Hatoyama's Democrats emerged as leading party in the Diet, with substantial plurality over two Socialist parties combined.
 - C. Democrats now have 185 of Diet's 467 seats, same number as Yoshida's Liberals held after the 1953 election.
 - D. Liberals now hold only 112 seats.
- II. For first time since war's end, Japan's Upper House will assume a role of real importance.
 - A. The Democrats have only 21 seats in 250-seat Upper House, dominated by pro-Yoshida conservatives, who can easily block Lower House bills.
 - B. Lower House two-thirds majority is required to override Upper House rejection.
 - C. Democrats cannot hope to muster such a majority on issues where Liberals are split.

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III. Most significant election result is gain by two Socialist parties of 21 seats, for total 156 (exactly 1/3). Since 8 Leftists will vote with them on key issues, this offers opportunity for some blocking.

- A. Example--it is enough to block any constitutional revision.
- B. The conservatives, alarmed over gradual growth of leftist strength, would like to make such amendments as would enhance Emperor, water down occupation reforms, and restore some pre-war "discipline."
- C. If Socialists stick together, they can block such moves.

IV. Another constitutional issue is famed Article 9, which provides: "...the Japanese people, forever, renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation, or the threat or use of force, as a means of settling disputes with other nations." "For the above purpose, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the State will not be recognized."

- A. Hatoyama favors dumping Article 9, to eliminate "misunderstanding" about rearmament.
- B. Rearmament measures to date are "interpreted" as falling within Japan's "natural" right of self-defense, without creating "war potential."

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- C. Same close reasoning would, of course, permit continued expansion of rearmament, without ever raising constitutional issue.
- V. Nevertheless, postwar Japanese governments have all displayed great sensitivity on this issue, have been most reluctant to outdistance public opinion.
 - A. Hatoyama's followers have probably not forgotten their crushing defeat in 1953 when they openly advocated rearmament, as opposed to Yoshida's idea of economically more palatable gradual increase in "self-defense" measures.
 - B. Until Japan has a government which commands a Diet majority, rather than plurality, it is likely to go slow on rearmament in order to avoid a no-confidence vote (simple majority) which would overthrow it.
 - C. Actually, statements by Democratic leaders make clear that rearmament is secondary to economic recovery, which will continue to receive first priority.

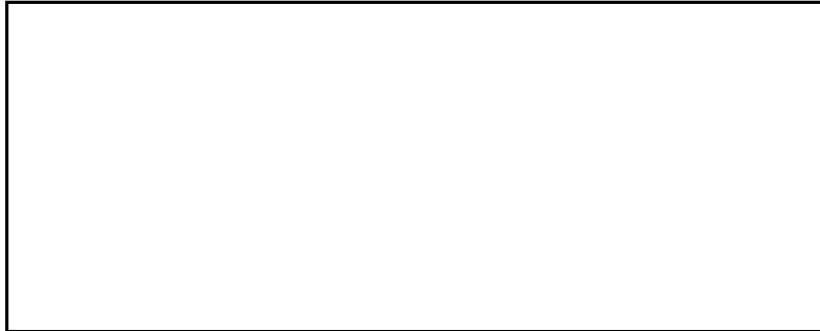
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1. Hatoyama stated (following elections) that he planned to finance a new housing program through reduction of Japan's contribution to the support of United States Security Forces. (\$148 million this Jap fiscal year.)

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2.



3. Finance Minister Ichimade campaigned on promise to lower defense costs.

D. Japanese Cabinet decided (18 Jan) that defense expenditures for fiscal year beginning 1 Apr 55 will not exceed past year's.

1. That appropriation was \$220 million for Jap forces, \$148 million for support of US forces, was later reduced by \$12.5 million.
2. Jap planning for future implies that US will have to pay for any increase, by taking cut in Japan's contribution to maintenance US forces.